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ENGLAND IN THE ORIENT.

BY PROFESSOR ARMINIUS VAMBÉRY.

AS A result of the great social and political transformation to which the Asiatic world was subjected more than a century ago, man in the Orient has already divested himself of many peculiarities, habits, and customs, known under the generic name of *Asiaticism*, and is on the eve of abandoning those ideas and views which were formerly believed to be inseparable from his nature and from the climatic conditions of his home. An extraordinary movement has taken place among the Asiatics, from Japan to the shores of the Adriatic, and from the banks of the Lena to the Indian Archipelago. In searching for the reasons of this striking change in a vast portion of our fellowmen, we are apt to put forward "Western civilization, and the all-pervading spirit of the modern world" as the chief cause of the phenomenon, but as the nations constituting the West differ greatly in their political, social and ethnical conditions, we are well justified in asking: Which of the Western nations has contributed the most towards civilizing the East, and upon which of them can we look as the potent agent and zealous apostle of our culture in the future?

This question has often been asked me since my return from the various countries of Mohammedan Asia, and, when I have answered that the English or the Anglo-Saxon race in general has proved to be the best fitted for the propagation of modern ideas, I have been set down as a critic with a special bias for the English-speaking race, and as one who finds nothing to blame in that fraction of the Western world. My criticisms, however, are based upon facts, and upon a long-standing intimate connection with Turks, Persians, Tartars, Afghans, and Hindus on the one hand, and with English and Americans on the other.

As to the facts, I may cite, before all, the astounding success England's civilizing efforts have hitherto met in India—that very hotbed of Asiatic opinions and notions, and of all the vices, abuses and shortcomings for which we have to blame the Western portion of the Eastern World. There, where centuries ago mankind was languishing under the most cruel tyranny, where life and property were at the mercy of ruthless despots and autocrats, and where blind superstition and gross ignorance furthered oppression and injustice—we now find security, prosperity, justice and enlightenment continually spreading and causing a total change in the cultural and intellectual condition of that vast country. Since 1856 the cultivated area has increased by fifty per cent. in thinly peopled districts like Burma and Assam ; by thirty to sixty per cent. in the Central Provinces, Berar and parts of Bombay ; and by twenty per cent. in the thickly peopled provinces of Oudh, so that the gross agricultural yield in India is calculated to have doubled since 1858.

As to public instruction, recent statistics show that there are 128 colleges and college departments with 13,614 undergraduates on the rolls, and 133,410 schools with 3,476,194 scholars. In the secondary schools there were 417,000 boys and 27,000 girls. There are also five universities, while the medical colleges are turning out numbers of well-trained native practitioners, and even women doctors are now beginning to practise. Normal schools are training teachers, and engineering and other technical schools are increasing in numbers. The expenditure on education in 1887 was £2,637,000, an outlay which has been since considerably increased. In reference to the material progress we may mention that in 1889 15,200 miles of railway were in operation, 103,000,000 passengers and 22,000,000 tons of goods having been carried during the year. There were 31,895 miles of telegraph, over which 2,750,000 messages were sent, while the area irrigated by canals was 10,630,000 acres. Similar progress is to be seen in trade, and should we be inclined to record the various improvements effected in the different branches of administration, as well as the mental advance noticeable in all classes of that huge motley population of Hindustan, volumes might be filled. We may, therefore, safely state that the English have been able to divert the thoroughly Asiatic

mind of the Hindus into grooves of European thought—nay, into the British manner of thought and action, so much so that a great German statesman, struck by this phenomenon, quite unparalleled in the history of mankind, rightly remarked: “If the British lose Shakespeare and Milton and every other writer who has made their name illustrious throughout the world, the justice and ability with which they have administered India will be an imperishable memorial of their nation.”

From India we might well turn to Egypt. Here, too, we see order, security and justice spreading amongst a formerly oppressed and down-trodden population. The fellah enjoys an epoch of welfare and happiness he never knew under the rule of his co-religionist princes; in fact, he will now learn to appreciate the fabulous treasures of his native soil, and, above all, he will perceive that difference of creed and color has nothing to do with the capacity and honesty of a government. It is useless to deny that British rule has done more in a few years for the Nile country than whole centuries of the rule of former princes. And if we look to Eastern Asia we cannot fail to perceive that all the changes wrought there in the social, political and economical conditions of Japan, China and Siam are mainly due to the influence of England and America. It is the Anglo-Saxon spirit which pervades all the reforms and innovations. Anglo-American enterprise has aroused the formerly sluggish Orientals to activity, and the language of Shakespeare and of Milton is the tie which binds the Eastern Asiatic to the West. The members of the Austro-Hungarian embassy to the imperial court of Tokio were obliged to use English in their conversation with the Emperor, whilst the officers sent from Japan to the Sultan of Turkey could only make themselves understood through the assistance of English-speaking interpreters, for in the East French has ceased to be the language of diplomacy.

In the face of these undeniable facts we are well entitled to ask: What is the reason that the English have succeeded so splendidly in their work of reform in Asia, and how can they perpetuate their rule over vast multitudes far away from their insular home? The answer is very plain. Like the rest of mortals, Britons or Americans do not possess superhuman or miraculous powers; all their astounding success is simply the outcome of those ethnical, political and moral qualities, through which they

have distanced other European nations, and by which they very naturally over-awe Asiatics. An eminently strong individuality, fostered by a liberal political constitution, and by the spirit of freedom, has at all times encouraged their spirit of enterprise; stimulated them to acts of daring, and made them persevering and courageous under the most critical circumstances or the greatest dangers. The quiet temper and the indifference so frequently shown by a single English traveller amidst the hootings and clamorous behavior of the Oriental mob, by which he finds himself surrounded in the populous bazaars of Eastern towns, offers an excellent *pendant* to the attitude adopted by the English Trading Company in India on their first appearance on the coast of Bengal. Surrounded, pushed, threatened and attacked on all sides, the British troops valiantly held their own against the far more numerous armies of the Moguls, until the latter, overawed by the courage, tenacity and perseverance of the intruding foreigner, became gradually accustomed to the uncalled-for visitor, and even submitted to him. Next to this ranks the gravity and calmness with which the Englishman appears amongst Asiatics, who hate levity of character, and who are particularly inspired with respect for a man of dignified manner and serious demeanor. This quality of the English, degenerating, alas! very often into coldness and haughtiness—particularly in the case of the half educated—may well prevent a mutual *rapprochement* between the conqueror and the conquered, and it has also in many cases essentially injured the friendly relations of both. On this account the Russian conqueror is ahead of the English, for the former, being himself an Asiatic, will much more readily entertain a close and intimate relation with Orientals than will the Briton of higher education, who enters his field of Asiatic enterprise quite fresh from Oxford or Cambridge. It would be not only useless but culpable to disregard this national error, to which must be ascribed more than one calamity which has befallen the English in the East.

On the other hand we ought not to conceal from ourselves the fact that an Oriental is accustomed to respect a stern master; in fact, the ruler in whom he discovers an easy-going mind and puerile habits will never be able to influence his character or to bring him round to obedience. According to Oriental notions, gravity of character and sense of justice are qualities inseparable from each other;

the Oriental patiently bears the one in order to enjoy the benefits of the other, and consequently he finds it quite natural that the rule of his English master is, above all, just and equitable, and that he never has to apprehend any unfair treatment. It is the relation between the father and his grown-up children which serves as a bond between the English ruler and his Asiatic subjects, and if this ruler, in fulfilling his paternal duties, shows himself truly liberal and generous, as the English do, owing to their innate sense of liberty and fair play—and Oriental rulers never do or did—then the mutual understanding must unavoidably result in those happy relations which we find to-day between Great Britain and her Asiatic subjects, in whose loyalty and contentment lies the most eloquent proof of the superiority and the solidity of British rule in Asia.

Superficial critics, men unacquainted with the real spirit of the East, have frequently declared that English rule and English views, representing the highest degree of Western civilization, must be too strange to the totally different notions of mankind in Asia, and that consequently British institutions must be unpalatable to the genuine Asiatic. Although I have heard this remark from many statesmen and eminent philosophers of our day, it is nevertheless a fallacy which needs refutation, for no Asiatic is so shortsighted as not to perceive the good qualities of the English rule compared with the disorderly, rapacious and despotic government of his native princes.

Difference in religion, which with an Asiatic outweighs all possible considerations, has been and will long remain the great stumbling block in the way of a thorough appreciation of the superior qualities of the foreign conqueror, and will prevent a close contact between the ruler and the ruled, but religious tolerance—a virtue totally unknown to the Asiatic—tends to mitigate this evil. The non-interference with the religious customs and habits, nay, the respect paid by the Christian conquerors to certain rites, has particularly struck the Mohammedan portion of the Asiatic world, and furnishes an evident proof of justice on the part of the English, and if we add that the English ruler does not officially countenance the work of Christian missionaries, and that before the law all religions enjoy equal right and protection—which cannot be said either of Russia or of other Christian rulers in the East—then it will be easily understood that British rule is not

by any means oppressive to the natives of Asia, and that, having once submitted to it, they become patient and happy subjects.

It has often been said that the Asiatic, having served from time immemorial as a blind tool of despotism and tyranny, will never be able to acquire a taste for political freedom and liberty of action. Politicians on the Continent have frequently reproached England with being too liberal in her dealings with Asiatic societies and have warned the foreign ruler of India of the evil consequences and dangers which must follow. This, too, I am glad to say, is another fallacy. Liberty is a golden fruit towards which mankind, whether in Asia or in any other part of the world, has always eagerly stretched forth a hand, and those who have tasted it will certainly not readily renounce its enjoyment. The truly liberal institutions which have emanated hitherto from our Western world to the Asiatic are mostly, if not exclusively, of English or American extraction, and we have only to look at Japan and India to see that they have not fallen on barren soil, but that they have taken root and promise to thrive as well as they do in the West.

A long correspondence with Japanese and Hindus, brought up amid European surroundings, has taught me that these Oriental fellow-men of ours value highly our liberal institutions; it is not the least strange or troublesome to them to raise their heads from the dust of abject slavery, and they are sometimes even too fiery and too hasty in the path of liberalism, as proved by the Benzali Babus, who had found their political ideal in the late Mr. Bradlaugh, or by young Turkey, who delighted in Robespierre and Danton. The truly liberal spirit of government, far from being a menace or a danger, is the real stronghold of British rule in Asia, and whilst it outshines the rule of the rest of foreign conquerors in the old world, so does it afford the best guarantee of stability and duration.

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